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Viewing cable 06TELAVIV3198, KNESSET SPEAKER DISCUSSES CRISIS WITH CODELS

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06TELAVIV3198	2006-08-14 13:29	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tel Aviv

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[not](#)
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null
Carol X Weakley 08/16/2006 04:04:16 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

Cable
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

TEL AVIV 03198

SIPDIS
CXTela:

ACTION: ECON

INFO: ADM PD AID FCS IPSC SCI IMO CONS RES POL DCM
AMB

DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:GCRETZ
DRAFTED: ECON:AABELL
CLEARED: POL:NOLSEN, ECON:RTANSEY

VZCZCTVI307
OO RUEHC RUEHXX

DE RUEHTV #3198/01 2261329
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 141329Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5606
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003198

SIPDIS

CODEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: KNESSET SPEAKER DISCUSSES CRISIS WITH CODELS
MILLER AND ROYCE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik (Kadima) and MK Yuval Steinitz (Likud) told CODELs Miller and Royce on August 9 that Hizballah's July 12 attack demonstrated that the nature of the conflict between Israel and Iran is ideological and not territorial. Itzik explained that the Hizballah actions, following Israel's 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon, have left Israelis feeling frustrated, and less inclined to believe that they will ever live in peace. She recounted how the present conflict has convinced her to adopt more right-wing positions, and both she and Steinitz asked the CODEL for USG help in obtaining more time to "finish the job" in Lebanon. Itzik encouraged the USG to use moderate Arab states to drive a wedge between Syria and Iran, and put Iran's nuclear ambitions back into the international spotlight. She agreed with Rep. Johnson that the GOI needs to make public diplomacy a higher priority in order to win the battle of ideas. End summary.

DOVISH ITZIK SOUNDING MORE LIKE A HAWK

¶2. (C) Left-of-center Speaker of the Knesset Dalia Itzik (Kadima) told CODELs Miller and Royce that she had supported Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 as an important gesture of Israel's desire for peaceful coexistence. She confided that, after delivering a hard-line speech on August 8, her former colleagues in the Labor Party had asked her how could she have moved so far to the right. Itzik replied that she hadn't moved, but that reality had moved around her. Articulating the frustration of her constituency, she said, "all we want is to be a normal country, but they don't let us. Maybe we have to be more aggressive with them...I don't believe I hear myself saying this."

A CONFLICT OF IDEOLOGY, NOT TERRITORY

¶3. (C) Itzik stressed that Hizballah's behavior has convinced her that the Shia do not seek peaceful coexistence, but only the destruction of the State of Israel. She said that the impetus for this conflict is not territory, but ideology, with an Islamic culture that seeks at least regional, if not global, domination. MK Yuval Steinitz (Likud) said that Iran's six-year arms buildup in Lebanon was meant not to deter Israel, but for use against Israel. Furthermore, he claimed that Iran wants to "cleanse" the Middle East of all non-Muslims, and he expects their next target to be Christian Arabs. He complained that most Western leaders are reluctant to recognize this ideology publicly, and instead prefer to incorrectly define the conflict as a territorial dispute. Steinitz also said that the Knesset and Congress have

important roles to fill in advocating closer inter-governmental cooperation in the war on terrorism. Steinitz said the two legislative bodies should now push to fund a cooperative short-range rocket defense system.

STRENGTHEN THE MODERATE ARABS

14. (C) Responding to the CODELs questions about long-term strategies for defeating radical political Islam, Itzik said that the USG and Israel must not lump the entire Arab world together in one basket with the extremists. She stressed that the Western powers must encourage Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to be strong. By publicly calling him weak, she continued, the GOI has made Hamas believe that Abbas is, in fact, weak. Itzik said that moderate Arab regimes in Jordan, Tunisia, and Qatar need Hizballah to be defeated as much as does Israel and the U.S., and they have a constructive strategic role to play. Itzik also said that the USG and GOI must try to wedge Syria away from Iran, and put Iran's nuclear ambitions back into the international spotlight.

LET US FINISH THE JOB

15. (C) Itzik complained to the CODELs that Secretary Rice had reacted too harshly towards Israel after the IAF strike on Qana. She said that the GOI had expressed its sorrow for the unintended civilian casualties, but rhetorically asked when had the Arabs ever apologized for Israeli civilian casualties. She said that, if anything, the IDF had acted "too morally" by not acting more aggressively in Lebanon. Itzik said that it was very important for Israel to be allowed now to "finish the job."

16. (C) Steinitz asserted that Israel must eradicate the Hizballah military presence from southern Lebanon and assessed that the IDF had done a good job destroying its infrastructure, the "body," but had not yet finished the job of destroying all the "fingers." He lamented that this should have been the first priority at the beginning of the war, but said that the GOI needs USG support for more time to finish the war now.

A CALL FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

17. (C) Rep. Johnson warned Itzik and Steinitz that Israel might not be able to "finish the job" using only military means, as the military campaign was creating as many enemies of Israel as it was destroying. She told the Knesset members that Israel was losing the propaganda war against Hizballah and urged them to make public diplomacy a higher priority in any Israeli military operation. Itzik agreed with the Congresswoman.

18. (C) Itzik concluded by saying that Israelis feel strong, but are frustrated with the neighborhood in which they live. She claimed that Israelis draw strength from fighting for their homeland, and that the GOI had no choice but to defend Israel's citizens. She expressed her gratitude for the CODEL's visit during this difficult time, and emphasized the value of American moral support for Israel.

19. (U) Participants:
ISRAEL
Speaker of the Knesset Dalia Itzik (Kadima)
MK Yuval Steinitz (Likud)
Foreign Policy Advisor to the Speaker Yaakov Levy
MFA Counselor Eyal Sela
MFA Counselor Iris Sapir

U.S.A.
Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL)

Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT)
Rep. Clay Shaw (R-FL)
Rep. Don Sherwood (R-PA)
Rep. Edward Royce (R-CA)
Mrs. Marie Royce
Staff Director Doug Roach
Staff Director Tom Sheehy
Staff Member Edward Burrier
Staff Member Brian Diffell
Econoff (Notetaker)

¶10. (U) The CODELs did not have an opportunity to clear this cable before departing post.

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CRETZ